

English Section



Editor : Diljit Singh 'Bedi'

DAYS COMMEMORATING HISTORICAL EVENTS **(16th July to 15th August)**

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| 17 July | Passed away of S. Teja Singh Smundri in the Lahore fort. To commemorate his contribution the building housing the offices of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has been named after him. (17-7-1926) |
| 24 July | Baba Gurdit Singh of Kama Gata Maru passed away. (24-7-1954) |
| 28 July | Governor General signed Gurdwara Act. (28-7-1925) |
| 31 July | S. Udham Singh was hanged in London. (31-7-1940) |
| 4 August | A peaceful agitation for long-standing Sikh demands, known as 'Dharam Yudh Morcha' was started by the Shiromani Akali Dal, headed by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal (4-8-1982) |
| 5 August | The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee resolved to launch Jaito Morcha. (5-8-1923) |
| 7 August | The Sikh Gurdwara Act. 1925 Gazetted. (7-8-1925) |
| 8 August | Guru Ka Bagh (Amritsar) Morcha was launched, 5505 Sikh courted arrested and many more suffered the rigorous of extreme forms of persecutions at the hands of the British Government with such exemplary courage and conviction that earned the Sikhs greatest admiration. The Govt. had to bow down to the Sikh Demands. (8-8-1922) |
| 15 August | Division of the Indian Sub-continent into India and Pakistan in 1947 by the British. Beause of this, the Sikhs were deprived off for their many historical religious places. (15-8-1947) |



In continuation with the last edition:

SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR SAHIB JI (1621-1675)

-S. Surjit Singh 'Gandhi'

We are taking pleasure while publishing these contents from the book *'History of the Sikh Gurus'* by S. Surjit Singh Gandhi former Head of Sikh History Research Board (SGPC).

Samnon, Bhikhi

The next important place of sojourn was Samnon. It was here that the Guru ji was informed of the arrival of Sikh Sangat from Kabul. In honour of the visit of the Sangat, a special Diwan was held, where they offered to the Guru ji their precious presents. The meeting of the Sangat and the Guru ji was so soulstirring that a peasant who was working in his fields nearby was deeply moved and he could find satisfaction only in offering all his cooked food, which he had just received from home, to the Guru ji and the Sikh Sangat. At the village Bhikhi, a local zamindar Des Raj (Desu) waited upon the Guru ji. The Guru ji advised him to remove the symbol around his neck which showed that he was a follower of Sakhi Sarvar. Des Raj promised to abide by the advice, but when he was taunted by his brothers-in-faith, he threw to winds the advice of the Guru ji and reverted to the old faith. He cast off the arrows given by the Guru ji as a mark of his benediction on him.

Khayale and Maur

The Khayale and Maur villages were visited next. The people of both the villages gave warm reception to the Guru ji. At a small distance from Maur at a place now called Talhi Sahib, a huge function was organised in celebration of the Sikh Guru Sahib anniversary. The function drew large crowds of people from far and near.

Talwandi

The next stoppage of the Guru ji was at Talwandi, now known as Damdama Sahib. The Guru ji was attended by a large number of people. This place was sanctified by the Guru ji in getting a tank dug. The Guru ji described this place as prophesied that this place would become a great religious centre in due course of time.

Bhatinda

From Talwandi, the Guru ji reached Bhatinda. The Guru ji stayed here for a period of nine days during which he enjoyed hunting in the thickly forests nearby. From Bhatinda,

the Guru ji marched to Sulisar where a few rascals made an abortive attempt to steal horses. According to Sakhi 22 of Sakhi Pothi, the thieves were caught and hanged by the Sikhs. This thing struck lesson into the hearts of those people who made light of the Sikhs' presence.

Bachhona

Next important places to which the Guru ji paid visit were Bara and Bachhona. At the former place, the Guru ji stayed for the whole of the rainy season.

Gobindpura

From Bachhona, the Guru ji proceeded to Gobindpura and after a short stay there moved on to Gaga, Gurne and Makror. The Ranghars of Gaga misbehaved towards the Sikhs but they soon regretted and asked for Guru Sahib pardon. According to Dr. Fauja Singh "to begin with, the Guru ji paid no heed to them but when they still followed his begging for forgiveness he excused them saying that their identity would ever remain unimpaired though they would never be an adequate match for the local Sidhu Jats who had always seen respectful towards the Sikhs. As a mark of their deep reverence for him, the Sidhus made offerings of potfuls of ghee and cotton sheets. They also fell under the spell of Guru Sahib personality and entered into the fold of Sikhism.

Bangar, Dhamdhan

Shortly after, the Guru ji entered Bangar, which is just an extension of the Malwa Desh. The Guru ji had toured this area previously also and therefore he did not face much difficulty while threading his way through the region. The most important of the places visited by the Guru ji in this part of the country was Dhamdhan and he must have stayed here for a fairly long time. The Guru ji did his best to alleviate the sufferings of the people of this area. He caused many wells sunk which were really a boon to the people of that parched region. The Guru ji attracted large crowds who began to look upon the Guru ji as their saviour and emancipator.

During all his travels, the Guru ji identified himself with the people and their sorrows and sufferings and he did whatever he could do to provide relief to them. He felt that only those minds which are strong in moral fervour and spirit were capable of struggling against tyranny and injustice. Accordingly, the Guru ji exhorted the people to imbibe spiritual and ethical values, sink differences on the basis of caste and birth, give up all fear and to face tyranny with resolute calmness. The Guru Sahib motto was 'frighten not, and fear not'. (Slok 16)

From the foregoing account of the travels of the Guru ji some important inferences can be drawn. First, the tour was a great success as it left a deep impact on the people.

Secondly the Guru ji took care to make personal contacts with the panchayats, Choudharies and elders of different villages. Thirdly, he organised big functions to bring together people from far and near to discuss problems of common interest from common platform. Fourthly, he established centres of Sikhism at various places, possibly to lend continuity to his mission. Fifthly, the Guru ji gave special attention to the zamindars of the area. May it be, he had come to realize that they were the natural leaders of the people and their conversion to his faith would facilitate his work of awakening and articulating the people so as to enable them to achieve higher standard of culture and civilization.

Sixthly, during the greater part of his travels, the Guru ji moved with a large following and received the homage of the people along with many offerings. This was particularly true during the later phase of his travels. This caused misgivings and panic among the official circle to the local news-reporters made exaggerated, even distorted reports to the government regarding the movements and activities of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji. The fact that in the course of his tour the Guru ji conducted himself with dignity and authority lent some plausibility to these reports with the result that subsequently the Guru ji was martyred on their basis.

Duration of the tour

As regards the duration of the tour, nothing definitely can be said. Probably, the tour lasted for a year and a half. It appears that the start was made about the middle of A.D. 1673 and it was not till the end of A.D. 1674 or the beginning of A.D. 1675 that the Guru ji with his large train of followers returned home.

MARTYRDOM OF SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR SAHIB JI

Result of contradictions at conceptual and operational level

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji martyrdom is such an event that did not take place suddenly; it was, in fact, the result of the contradictions that lay at the root of the conceptual frameworks and operational activities of the Sunni section of the Muslims and those of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji. Besides this the hyper-sensitivity which was partly the product of over-zeal for the implementation of the Sunni policies and partly the psychological hurt which was caused by Emperor's inability to prop up the tottering jagirdari-based polity.

Ram Rai was no factor

The part played by Ram Rai, if at all there was any, was insignificant and certainly it was not a determining factor vis-a-vis the Guru Sahib execution. As a matter of fact, Ram Rai played into Aurangzeb's hands whose influence on him was so deep that he felt pleasure in defecting from the Sikh ranks. When the decision of Guru Sahib execution was

to be taken Ram Rai was not consulted at all. Aurangzeb took the decision keeping in view his own policy and mission. There is no historical evidence that Ram Rai¹ had discussion with the Emperor on this matter before or after leaving Delhi for Pathan region.

However, to be clear about the factors which were responsible for the execution of the Guru Ji we will have to examine all relevant facts carefully.

Muslim unity undergoing stresses

The period of the Great Mughals was a period of religious stresses. As a matter of fact the orthodox Muslim religious unity suffered its greatest stresses during the period from AD. 1550 to AD. 1650. Many forces, some political and more religious, were conspiring to weaken the hold over Indian Muslims of Sunni orthodoxy.

Mughal Rulers were eclectic Shi-ism

The Mughals were, by ancestry, taste and conviction, seekers and eclectics in religion, characteristics which their political necessities and ambitions tended to confirm. Taimur showed greater respect to Sufi thinkers than to the Sunni Ulemas. Babar and his son were no religious bigot and accepted Shi-ism although outwardly while negotiating for the support of the Persian Shi-ite Safarids. Moreover, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Shi-ism in India enjoyed political patronage. In the Deccan, Yusuf Adil Shah of Bijapur (1469-1510) pronounced himself a Shia as did Burhan-ud-din of Ahmednagar and Qutab Shah of Golconda. In North India, Bairam Khan, the guardian and minister of young Akbar was a Shia with a large Persian Shia following who settled down in India.

Furthermore, significant religious developments within the penumbra dividing Muslim from Hindu had softened religious acerbities in India. If from within Islam the mystics had appeared to reach out toward Hinduism, from within Hinduism, Bhagat Kabir Ji, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Chaitaniya with their condemnation of Caste, Hindu rituals and idolatry appeared to be reaching out toward Islam.

Muslim Mysticism

Important changes also occurred in the character of Muslim mysticism from Persia—the Shattri whose Shaikh Muhammed Ghawth was Humayun's spiritual preceptor, the Qadiri whose Shaikh Mir Muhammed was tutor to the Mughal prince, Dara Shikoh, and the Naqshbandi order, whose greatest luminary was Shaikh Ahmed of Iran. Members of the first two orders in particular were deeply influenced by the frankly pantheistic doctrines of the Spanish Muslim mystic. Ibn 'Arabi (1164-1240); they observed few of the restraints in expression characteristic of the earlier Chisti and Suharwardhi orders. What is more, their adherents were often intimately acquainted with Hindu mysticism.

Hindu Revival

Besides this, the Hindu revival which had been ushered in by the dawn of Bhakti

movement had been gaining strength and the Hindus relieved of the initial shock of the Muslim conquest had started asserting once again.

No exclusive State support to the Sunnies till Aurangzeb

None of such challenges were exactly new to Sunni orthodoxy, what was new was the political climate in India in which they had to be met. Until Aurangzeb's time, the Sunnies could not be confident of the exclusive support and patronage of the ruling power.

Akbar came to an understanding with the Hindu Rajputs, who served to underpin his empire, and with policy reinforcing his own personal religious inclinations, set his face against Muslim orthodoxy. The orthodox were scandalized not so much by the presence of Islamic ideas and practices in the Indian Muslim community as by the absence of political support in resisting them. Nonetheless they did not relent and were always intent upon establishing their hegemony and eliminating all the factors which did not allow their notions to be consummated in practice. In A.D. 1580, their sympathres were with Mirza Hakim and if they could not achieve success, it was because of the towering personality of Akbar the Great. Towards the end of Akbar's reign, they spared no effort to instigate Jahangir to rise against Akbar's religious policy. A critical examination of the factors that led to the revolt of Jahangir against his father would show how the Sunni Muslims formed the backbone of it. Sayyads of Burha helped him only when they exacted promise from Jahangir that when he ascended the throne, he would revise the liberal religious policy of his father and work according to the Sunni's concepts of things.

Although Jahangir was foiled in his attempt to snatch the sceptre from his father, yet the coterie that gathered around him did not melt away and on his accession they began to assert. Jahangir who had fallen under their spell partly out of political necessity and partly out of his conviction played into their hands at least for some time.

Notes and References

1. Mian Ahmed Shah, the author of *Twarikh-i-Hind* (1823) was the first historian who held Ram Rai alone responsible for the whole tragedy. Mufti Ali-uddin, author of *Ibrat Nama* and Bute Shah, author of *Twarikh-i-Punjab* also subscribed to this view. Bute Shah particularly tried to wash Aurangzeb's hands off the crime of showing him filled with excessive remorse after the execution (Badshah of degar kasan tasaf namadaid). The view is totally wrong in face of the positive evidence to the contrary. Ram Rai had openly expressed his suspicions of the Emperor's intentions in summoning the child Guru Har Krishan to Delhi. He offered condolence to Guru Har Krishan's mother on her son's death. He met Guru Tegh Bahadur at Delhi on his return from his eastern tour.

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Date. 02.7.16

Sh. Narinder Modi Ji,
Hon'ble Prime Minister,
Government of India,
New Delhi.

Subject:- Regarding the plight of Sikhs in Afghanistan and their safety.

Respected Sir,

Through this communication of mine, I yet again want to highlight the plight of Sikhs living in Afghanistan.

As per a news item that appeared in the print media a couple of days ago, the Sikhs families are continuously receiving threats from the Afghan Talibans and other groups to pay extortions and/or to leave Afghanistan.

A few days ago, in Kabul, a Sikh hakim named Jagtar Singh was threatened that his head would be severed if he didn't convert to Islam. His life was saved due to timely intervention of the passers by and the neighbors. In yet another incident, Sikhs and Hindus residing in the Helmand province have been asked to shell out 2800 dollars per months or to leave Afghanistan. These incidents have again raised concerns about the safety of the Sikhs residing in that country and as a result the Sikh brethren which was in large numbers in Afghanistan has been reduced to only a few hundred.

A lot of tension is prevailing in the Kalachi area which is situated on the outside of Kabul. Due to increase in Muslim population, the people have built houses around the cremation ground. The residents abuse and throw stones at the processions/people that come there to cremate their near ones. They allege repeatedly following ill due to the false smell of burning dead human beings over there. On the other side, Mr. Dahi-ul-Haq, the Afghan Minister for Haj and Religious Affairs, has issued a statement that there is no such condition prevailing in Afghanistan and the government is doing its best for the minorities.

The undersigned, being the President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar, the apex religious representative body of the Sikhs that takes care of the issues faced by the Sikhs throughout the world, urge your goodself to take personal interest and ensure that the safety of the Sikhs and Hindus residing in Afghanistan is maintained at every cost and the perpetrators of such heinous crimes against the minorities are brought to book and such instances do not recur.

Regards,


(Avtar Singh)

President,
Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee,
Sri Amritsar.